



# Vine

FROM RABBI ZEMEL

## MICAH MUST ADVOCATE FOR JEWISH VALUES NOW

DEAR FRIENDS,

At a recent lunch a friend asked plaintively, “Will small talk ever be the same again?” Like many of you, I am still reeling from the 2016 election. The disruptions caused by the new administration have only added to my personal search for clarity in the midst of confusion.



As I wrote in the last *Vine*, the synagogue is a place where we go to make sense of our world. I also believe that there is now a compelling need for the American synagogue to be a strong voice in the public square. In the words of our ancient sage Hillel, “If not now, when?”

Micah, I believe, should act on three guiding principles:

1. We should defend constitutional democracy and the laws that enable it to flourish: freedom of the press, freedom of religious expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom to petition the government. These are rights guaranteed to all Americans and we must protect them—always.

There are other, more subtle norms necessary for our system to thrive. We must advocate for and model civil discourse—the ability to disagree with each other with respect and grace—always acknowledging that no one side ever has a monopoly on wisdom.

We must be advocates of truth. Our tradition teaches that truth is a value without which the world cannot exist. Truth and the relentless search for truth is a gift of the Enlightenment—as is our own Reform Judaism. In this sense, the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ►

## Singing for Micah House

BY GENIE GROHMAN

MICAH HOUSE IS going to get a new roof thanks in part to the proceeds from the Georgetown Chorale’s spring concert on April 29 and a concert in March.

“Micah House is thrilled to be this year’s beneficiary of the Georgetown Chorale’s concert,” said board member Ann Sablosky, noting that both Micah House and the Georgetown Chorale were founded in 1989. “The money raised by the two concerts will help Micah House pay for a new roof the house needs.”

Earlier this year, Micah House received a grant from Riverside Baptist Church, which also will be invested in the roof. (For more on the Riverside Baptist gift, see the February/March 2017 *Vine*, page 6.)

The chorale’s April 29 concert will feature George Frideric Handel’s exciting and rarely performed *L’Allegro, il Penseroso, ed il Moderato* (the cheerful, the contemplative and the moderate one) which, despite its Italian title, is a musical setting of poems by John Milton and is in English.

The Georgetown Chorale is a mixed chorus of close to 100 singers, including eight participants from Temple Micah: Nadine Braunstein, Barbara Diskin, Jan Greenberg, Genie Grohman, Ed Grossman, Jennifer Gruber, Ken Schwartz, and Maurice Singer.

It gives to the community both its music and financial support: its motto is “Community Service Through Music.” Each year’s spring concert benefits a local charitable organization. Since its founding 28 years ago, the chorale has donated more than \$250,000 to D.C.-area organizations.

This year, Micah members have an

opportunity to enjoy a wonderful concert and support Micah House, a home for women in recovery from substance abuse.

*L’Allegro, il Penseroso, ed il Moderato* offers vivid imagery and distinctive verse patterns of Milton’s poems. “Handel was inspired to some of the most wonderful music of his career,” said Chorale conductor Richard Giarusso: “Each chorus is a perfect and subtle marriage between music and text.” With the Chorale, the concert will feature Giarusso as baritone soloist, guest soloists soprano Allison Mondel and tenor Patrick Kilbride, and a small orchestra. The concert will also include selections from Purcell’s “The Fairy Queen.”

In addition to this major concert, Micah House will also receive the proceeds from a small concert sponsored by the Georgetown Chorale on March 26, an all-Bach program that featured Giarusso, pianist Andrew John Welch, the chorale’s accompanist, and violinist Lauren Rausch. This “extra” concert is an unprecedented act of generosity by the Chorale.

The April 29 concert is at 3 pm, at the First Congregational United Church of Christ, 945 G Street, NW. The lovely and acoustically wonderful church is located between the Gallery Place and Metro Center stations, and underground parking (\$10) is available at the church.

Advance tickets (through April 28) are \$25 for adults and \$15 for students/children (at the door, \$30 and \$15) and can be purchased online at the Chorale’s website: [www.georgetownchorale.org](http://www.georgetownchorale.org).

Treat yourself and your friends to a wonderful concert and do a mitzvah by supporting Micah House. ♦

“Every person shall sit under  
his grapevine or fig tree with  
no one to make him afraid.”  
MICAH, CHAPTER 4, VERSE 4

# Vine

Vol. 53 No. 4

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

# THE NOT SO GLAMOROUS BUT ALWAYS REWARDING WORK OF THE TEMPLE MICAH BOARD

BY ED LAZERE

Temple Micah thrives on the commitment and creativity of so many people: our worship leaders, administrative staff, hundreds of congregants—and the Board of Directors. You probably have some inkling of what the board does, but not a complete picture. Here are some highlights of how we operate and what we're up to.



Temple Micah board members serve three-year terms, and many serve two terms; we meet once a month. A nominating committee, graciously led by Jonathan Stern in recent years, makes nominations each spring that are voted on at the June annual meeting.

**Money, Money, Money:** The board's main goal is to support the sustainability of Temple Micah, and that starts with having the financial resources to maintain our facility, have terrific staff, and support creative programming. As much as the word “budget” can put many of us to sleep (not me!), it's amazing how many board conversations come down to money. Because dues only cover about two-thirds of expenses, the board needs to make sure we are engaged in fundraising efforts, including the auction and annual appeal.

In recent years, the board has focused on building an endowment, money that can generate interest and a steady stream of income. The Endowment Fund is relatively new and needs your support. We hope you're ready to put Temple Micah into your estate plans; we're ready to answer your questions.

The board also works with Executive Director Rachel Gross to set our budget each year. With growing membership and a newly retired mortgage, we were able to add staff this year for our growing Machon, and have brought on a part-time development maven to focus on fundraising (see box on page 5). For next year we are considering additional administrative staff to support office functions, more camp scholarships, and our first-ever cantorial intern to help at High Holidays and then once a month.

**Space, Space, Space:** Temple Micah is a growing community, a good sign of our vitality and pretty uncommon among American congregations. We need more space—for the Machon, the office, and general meeting space. The board is exploring both short-term and longer-term solutions to make sure that a shortage of space does not hold us back.

**Support for Clergy and Other Staff:** We raise money and set a budget so that our worship leaders and other staff have all they need to work their magic. The board generally stays out of the way, as we should. But we chip in when needed. That includes supporting projects like an information packet for new members. And we try to be a sounding board, especially for our rabbis and executive director, as they make important decisions. Many at the temple do the same thing, but the board has a close-up view of what is needed and the responsibility for helping shape the temple's strategic direction.

It's been an honor to serve on the temple's board for almost four years now, and as president for almost one. I am proud to be a small part of keeping a great institution strong.

Mazal Tov to Adam Goldstein and Shira Zemel on the birth of their son, Zev Natan Goldstein, grandson of Rabbi Daniel and Louise Zemel. We wish the family many years of health, happiness, and love!

# A Victim of Gun Violence Shares How She Turned Anger into Action

BY MEG VAN ACHTERBERG, MEMBER OF TEMPLE MICAH'S GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION GROUP

*Editors' Note: Temple Micah's Gun Violence Prevention (GVP) group has partnered with local activists working to address gun violence and its root causes. This profile is the first in an occasional series about community members impacted by violence in our region. The GVP group offers a variety of ways to serve: writing condolence letters to friends and family of those lost to violence in DC, planning educational events, and supporting youth mentoring initiatives, for example. To learn more, please contact Rabbi Susan Landau at [rabbilandau@templemicah.org](mailto:rabbilandau@templemicah.org).*

GUN VIOLENCE LEAVES deep scars across Washington, DC, and one person who has felt its effects all too intimately is Ryane Nickens, a student at the Howard University School of Divinity. Nickens participated on a panel at Micah that the synagogue's Gun Violence Prevention group convened on March 4. It followed a special Mosaic Theater staging at the temple of the play "The Gospel of Loving Kindness," about the shooting of a Chicago teenager.

On a recent Saturday, Ryane Nickens sat with me at a coffee shop in Northeast Washington to share her own story.

Nickens, 38, grew up in DC's Ward 8 and says she didn't know what violence was until she was 8 years old and the drug epidemic exploded. "One day there was a shooting," she says. "We went out and that was the first dead body I had seen." She was shocked but "all too soon it became the norm." Her own uncle was killed a few years later.

Then, at the end of middle school, Nickens lost any sense of safety. A neighbor invaded her home and shot her mother and siblings, killing her older sister Tracey. Nickens escaped by hiding in her room. The trauma changed her profoundly. She had always been a good student, but she became a "super" student and buried herself in studies to avoid her anger and depression.

The violence in her neighborhood marched on. She remembers asking,

"God, what is this? Why?" Every month another resident was shot—and sometimes killed. "It paralyzes you. You start to think, does life even matter? Why plan for the future?"

During her senior year of high school, Nickens lost another sibling to gun violence—this time, her brother Ronnie. By now, "Everything important I associated with death," she says. "Everything I love, I lose. What is the point of loving anything?"

Still, education kept her moving forward. She planned on a law career and interned with a law firm, participating in mock trials, but after her brother's murder, "I was conflicted. I wanted to get away, but I wanted to stay because I thought my presence might save someone else." A rite of passage of high school seniors everywhere—deciding where to go to college—had been hijacked by trauma and survivor's guilt. Eventually, she studied journalism at North Carolina Central University. Returning to Washington, she landed an executive assistant job with a biomedical government contractor.

Although her life was good, "I felt like there was something else." Her pastor preached from Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." This sermon was a turning point. She decided to write a book about the trauma she had lived through.

The government contractor job ended and she struggled to find work. "God closed all the doors," she now believes, out of the understanding that at the end of the road, "There was a place for me out there."

One of those places turned out to be Howard University School of Divinity where she is now a student. The other is Brighter Day Enrichment Academy, where she now works. This nonprofit organization provides after school care and summer camp for low-income

at-risk youth in Ward 8. Kids find a safe place to do homework, study music and art, and learn about new cultures. But Brighter Day isn't a typical after-care. The program accepts low-income families who cannot afford traditional afterschool programs, including many children from the foster care system.

"We try to cater to the whole family to build a community (and provide) everything possible to make them better students," she explains. That includes coordinating with teachers to understand each child's learning challenges and get homework packets, to giving children backpacks and winter coats, to running a food pantry for the parents.

Nickens believes her own childhood experiences have helped her connect with the children at Brighter Day, even the ones who initially seem to reject help. "I remember, I was angry out of my pain, and it seemed like nobody was doing anything about it. They would say, 'This (violence) should stop—but there was no real action to make it stop.'" She is grateful to the teachers and professors who took an interest in her. And now, she can pay it forward. "If we can turn (the kids') pain to empowerment, then we will make citizens that are active in their community. I could have picked up and moved somewhere else, but I have chosen to stay in DC because that is where people share similar stories to me."

Brighter Day Enrichment Academy is always looking for volunteers and material help. The program welcomes donors who can sponsor tuition for a family in need, as well as fundraising support by volunteer grant writers. Volunteers with "interesting jobs" are welcome to talk on career day, and the kids love people who want to share their cultural heritage by bringing food and talking about their traditions. To learn more about how you can help, contact [info@bdadc.org](mailto:info@bdadc.org) or check out the website: [www.bdadc.org](http://www.bdadc.org). ♦

## COMING ATTRACTIONS

Here's a sampling of coming Micah activities. For a detailed schedule of all upcoming events and services, check out [www.templemicah.org](http://www.templemicah.org).

THURSDAY, APRIL 20 • 7:30 PM  
**Synagogue Night Out at Theater J**

Share an evening at the theater with Micah friends at *Brighton Beach Memoirs* by Neil Simon, and stay afterwards for a discussion with the cast. Get discounted tickets here.

SUNDAY, APRIL 23 • 7 PM

**Yom HaShoah Service**

Reflect and learn with us as Rabbi Marc Lee Raphael shares poetry of the Holocaust.

SUNDAY, APRIL 30 • 11:30 AM

**Micah House Walk**

Join our annual "mini-walk" to benefit Micah House, a transitional housing program for homeless women in recovery from substance abuse. Pizza and refreshments to follow. Please register with the temple office.

SUNDAY, MAY 7 • 10:15 AM

**People of the Book Fair**

An annual community-wide celebration of books, the fair has a great lineup of authors for all ages. Stay tuned for more details on this fun and educational morning.

SATURDAY, MAY 13 • 6 to 9:30 PM

**Temple Micah's Annual Spring Auction**

Enjoy the social event of the season and help raise much-needed funds for Temple Micah! See details, page 12.

FRIDAY, MAY 19 • 7:30 PM

**Spring Community Shabbat Dinner**

Following Kabbalat Shabbat services, all members are invited to stay for a festive community dinner to eat great food, make new friends, and reconnect with old ones. Check the temple website for details, and to register.

SATURDAY, MAY 27 • 10:15 AM

**Adult B'nai Class Called to the Torah**

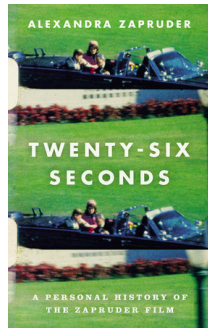
The 2015-2017 adult B'nai Torah class culminates two years of study and leads Shabbat morning services. All members are invited to celebrate. See details, page 6.

## INTERESTING SPEAKERS!

Temple Micah features two monthly lecture series—on Sundays and Wednesdays. For more details, go to [www.templemicah.org](http://www.templemicah.org).

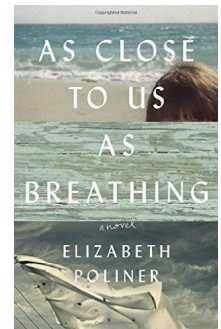
### SUNDAY SPEAKER SERIES

10:15 to 11:45 am



**Sunday, April 23 – Alexandra Zapruder** discusses her new book, *Twenty-Six Seconds: A Personal History of the Zapruder Film*. It tells the story of her grandfather's home movie of President Kennedy's assassination. A *New York Times* review called Zapruder "a gifted writer and storyteller who delicately unravels a minor mystery... that she makes human, complex and quite interesting."

**Sunday, May 7 – Liz Poliner** discusses her book, *As Close to Us as Breathing*. Poliner's novel is a multigenerational Jewish family saga about the long-lasting reverberations of a tragic summer in 1948. A *New York Times* review called it "a big-hearted roundelay of a novel that, among other things, performs the invaluable service of recovering a lost world."



### LUNCH & LEARN

Wednesdays from noon to 2 pm

A monthly program sponsored by the Aging Together Team. Reserve online at [www.templemicah.org](http://www.templemicah.org). Contact Cecilia Weinheimer via email, [lunchandlearn@templemicah.org](mailto:lunchandlearn@templemicah.org), or call the temple office, 202-342-9175, for details.



**April 12 – Dr. Louis Weiner** on "Progress in Cancer Therapy: Miracles, Challenges and Obstacles." Director of the Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center at Georgetown University, a recognized medical oncologist specializing in the treatment of gastrointestinal cancers, and an accomplished researcher developing novel immunotherapy treatments, Dr. Weiner will share his invaluable perspective on the latest developments in cancer care.



**May 10 – Heather Moran** on "Leading Jewishly in the Media World." Heather Moran has more than 20 years in the field of TV as a programmer for the Discovery Channel, E!, TLC, and the National Geographic Channel. In September, she joined the Sixth & I Historic Synagogue, where she serves as Executive Director. She'll discuss using Judaism's tenets in planning, developing and presenting ideas and programs to individuals and audiences.

## LESSONS FROM LANDAU

# BRINGING OUR GIFTS, DRAWING NEAR

BY RABBI SUSAN LANDAU

Recently I have been thinking a lot about interviews, and how the process of sharing our gifts brings us closer to God and each other. In the past month, the Temple Micah senior staff has searched for a cantorial intern (a first for Micah!), and a new Community Coordinator to work with all of our younger cohorts, from the Machon children, to the MiTY teens, to the young professionals of Next Dor. These searches have given us ample opportunity to shape interview questions that enable us to get to know a new person and potential colleague.

As we crafted it, the heart of the interview involves asking the candidates questions that allow them to sell themselves to us. In short, we want them to tell us how Micah will benefit from their gifts. We were looking for people who have a genuine desire to share their gifts—

their talents, enthusiasm, hard work—with our community.

To find the right fit, we looked for an elusive balance of confidence and unpretentiousness that lets us know a candidate is right for the job. Do they take themselves too seriously? Are they sure of themselves, but not immodest? It takes *chutzpah* to tell a potential employer that you are qualified for the job, and it takes humility to ask that one's gifts be accepted.

In fact, it takes humility any time people offer their gifts. And this is even truer when it comes to the act of bringing gifts to God, about which we are currently reading each week in the book of Leviticus. A gift must be given from a place of humility. All the more so when the offering we are bringing is a *korban*—something that is literally meant to draw us closer to the Divine. We read about all sorts of offerings, delineated in great

detail. But the message behind each is consistent: one can't be too brazen and expect to draw near to God.

The Talmud teaches that “One who sacrifices a whole offering shall be rewarded for a whole offering. One who offers a burnt-offering shall have the reward of a burnt-offering. But one who offers humility to God and man shall be rewarded with a reward as if he had offered all the sacrifices in the world. As it is written, ‘A contrite and humbled spirit is a sacrifice to God. God does not ignore a broken heart’” (Psalms 51:19; Sanhedrin 43b). One who offers humility is seen as one who offers everything. Because, in the end, a humble person offers his or her whole self.

That is what each of us who works at Temple Micah strives to do. And this is what we try to convey in the interviews we conduct. A love for the Jewish people, working knowledge of



Hebrew, or a background in Jewish summer camp can all be good signs that someone could thrive here. But the real test is whether or not candidates seem ready to ground themselves in humility and share their gifts.

We who serve this congregation bring our whole selves, flaws and all, as a most humble offering. And you, our congregants, do the same. This is how we build sacred community. We model our own offerings on the ultimate model for drawing near to God. While our acts of worship look different today than they did in biblical times, we still very much attempt to draw near to the sacred through our offerings. May all our efforts to draw near grow from a foundation of humility.



## MICAH WELCOMES DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

Susan Alpern-Fisch has joined the temple staff as a part-time development consultant.

A professional fundraiser for more than 35 years, she has

worked for nonprofits in the fields of arts, education, children's health, the environment and American-Israel politics.

Locally, Alpern-Fisch has been deeply involved in Bethesda's Imagination Stage and at Georgetown Day School, from which her two daughters graduated. Now that her younger daughter is away in college, she says

“the timing was perfect to shift my energy to Temple Micah and work with people whom I truly love and admire.” While she, husband Ricky, and their family are longtime members of Temple Beth Ami in Rockville, Alpern-Fisch in recent years has attended Micah's weekly Shabbat and High Holy Day services, worked on the auction and community Shabbat dinners, and participated in Kol Isha, Lunch and Learn, and social justice projects. “I have considered myself an ‘adopted member’ with Micah as my second spiritual home, so now I am especially honored and excited to be part of this extraordinary team,” she says.

# B'NAI TORAH CLASS: A COMMON GOAL TO LEARN TORAH BUILDS COMMUNITY

BY MEMBERS OF TEMPLE MICAH'S ADULT B'NAI TORAH CLASS

ON MAY 27, Cantor Meryl Weiner's Adult B'nai Torah class will be called to the Torah to chant from Parshat Bemidbar, "In the Wilderness," (*Numbers, Chapter 3*). We—the members of this year's class—invite the Micah community to join us for services and kiddush luncheon after.

On its surface, Numbers 3 describes the census of the Jewish people taken about a month after the exodus from Egypt. Below the surface, the parshah speaks to the monumental challenge facing Moses and Aaron of organizing a ragtag mass of refugees into a governable community and an organized fighting force.

So, too, has Cantor Weiner's band of 10 stood up to be counted, brought together by our common desire for deeper understanding of Torah and Jewish thought. The class became "a community that grew among us from our common goal," observed Jan W. Greenberg, a member of the

class. Some students were born to a Jewish parent or maybe two, with varying exposure to Jewish learning and tradition in their earlier years; others have come to their Jewish identity through choice. Some helped sons and daughters through the Micah b'nai mitzvah experience, and wished to deepen their own understanding of Torah.

The two-year class began in October 2015, meeting every Tuesday evening of the school year. For nearly all the students, the class provided a first opportunity to read Hebrew. The first year focused on learning the aleph bet, vowel marks, and the basics of identifying word roots that appear commonly in prayer. In the second year, Cantor Weiner began teaching us how to decode the microscopic (to older eyes) trope marks that appear under, over, and after the letters and words of the Torah. Armed with colored highlighters, magnifying glasses, and great determination, we discovered the pattern

of parsing verses, opening the door to chanting Torah from a scroll without vowels or punctuation—a bit like riding a bicycle for the first time without training wheels. By March, one by one, each member of the class had his or her moment of pleasurable surprise in recognizing that she or he was actually reading and chanting Hebrew—a milestone that seemed so distant when our class began.

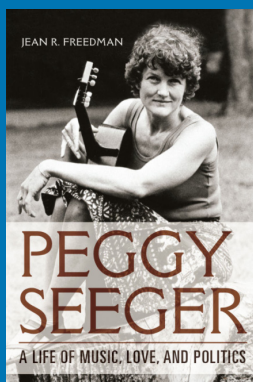
On several occasions, Rabbi Landau led study of the weekly Torah portion, exposing us to the rich tradition of textual analysis and rabbinical discourse. She, like Rabbis Zemel and Beraha, enriched several of our meetings with discussions of favorite books around contemporary Jewish themes. Classmate Libby Pearson noted, "I'm learning Hebrew to be able to chant from the Torah, but the books and discussions about Judaism are helping me think about the meaning of having a relationship with the Torah." And as Jodi Hope Anderson

observed, "the occasional supplemental glass of wine during class" also deepened understanding.

For its mitzvah project, the class decided to beautify the temple's garden beds, beating the freeze in the fall of 2016 to get bulbs in the ground, prune rose bushes, and plant a variety of colorful and hardy perennials on the front and side of the building. The class will continue to tend Micah's garden through spring.

Diana Oboler spoke for all when she said, "The class offers a wonderful opportunity for people of all skill levels and backgrounds to create, refresh, intensify, or redefine their connection to Judaism, Hebrew, and the meaning of Torah. It's also a great way to meet some really lovely people in our community."

Other members of the class include: Liz Blumenfeld, Laurie Brumberg, Tom Heinemann, Debra Knopman, Wamaid Levine-Borges, and Sarah Swatzburg. ♦



Micah member Jean Freedman is pleased to announce the publication of her new book, a biography of folksinger Peggy Seeger. Younger sister of American folk legend Pete, Seeger has lived much of her life in England, where she has been a progressive voice since the 1950s for civil rights, against the Vietnam War, in favor of women's rights and environmentalism, and more. Freedman draws on a wealth of research and conversations with the musician to tell her life story in *Peggy Seeger: A Life of Music, Love, and Politics*, published in March by the University of Illinois Press.

# Temple Micah and Good Faith Communities Coalition Support DC Funding for the Needy

BY LIVIA BARDIN

IN THE COMING months, Temple Micah members will join other congregations partnered with the Good Faith Communities Coalition to advocate for adequate and affordable housing and services for persons who are homeless and marginalized. The Coalition is an alliance of faith communities in Washington. Susan Landfield, Micah's liaison to Good Faith, says the group will urge Mayor Muriel Bowser and the City Council to focus on a few key 2018 budget priorities.

- **Continue Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding** for about 5,800 families whose needs have exceeded the five-year time limit under federal law. This will provide a

modest average benefit per family of \$150 per month to cover some services, but not housing assistance.

- **Address problems of chronic homelessness through several programs** including Permanent Supportive Housing, Targeted Affordable Housing, and additional case management services for singles. These funds will provide housing for 1,500 homeless and vulnerable District residents, many of whom are now receiving few or none of the support services they need.
- **Contribute to the Housing Production Trust Fund** for preservation and construction of

affordable housing for low-income families. Today, some 35,000 households seeking assistance are spending more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing, while the city loses more subsidized housing to gentrification every year.

Good Faith volunteers from member congregations will meet with Council members, testify at budget hearings, and contact lawmakers in support of these objectives. Every Micah member can help urge the District to fund these critical programs, whether or not you are a DC resident. If you're interested in helping, please contact [goodfaith@templemicah.org](mailto:goodfaith@templemicah.org). ♦

## TEMPLE MICAH WELCOMES SUMMER RABBINICAL INTERN

BY DORIAN FRIEDMAN

THE TEMPLE MICAH community is pleased to welcome Samantha Frank as this summer's rabbinical intern. For the next two months, she will assist the rabbis in leading services and shadow them to learn about Micah's daily routine.

Frank has just completed her third year at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. A 2011 graduate of Tufts University, she has served as a student rabbi at Temple Beth Am in Monessen, Penn., and as a Hebrew teacher at the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue in New York. She initially pursued a career in public health policy, focused on adolescent mental health, and was previously a research assistant at the Child Study Center

of New York University. "I thought community health was how I could live out my Jewish values," she says, but soon came to realize that the rabbinate was an equally powerful force for healing and community growth.

A local gal—born and raised in Silver Spring—she is excited to be returning to the area and spending more time with her family and friends. She's also delighted to be interning at Micah, and was attracted to our congregation for its reputation "for welcoming all people and for taking deeply seriously the commandment to pursue justice"—most recently, through our activism around gun violence and racial justice, to name but two initiatives. "It's a real testament to your

commitment to pursue social justice, and to make change," she says.

A fun fact: Her passion for macaroni and cheese is unrivaled, and she welcomes member recommendations for the best local offerings. ♦



### HELPING REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

Judaism teaches we must welcome the stranger. In an effort to support new refugees and immigrants at risk of deportation, a group of Temple Micah congregants has created *Sukkat Shalom* (Shelter of Peace). All members are invited to participate. The group is excited to be moving forward with a training with Lutheran Social Services on Wednesday, April 19, which is the next step in preparing the Micah community to welcome a refugee family. To learn more about Sukkat Shalom, please [click here](#) or contact the office.

# TZEDAKAH

## BUILDING IMPROVEMENT FUND

IN MEMORY OF  
Renee Achter, Jeffrey Cohn, by Susie and Harvey Blumenthal  
Harvey Goldberg, by Lora and Frank Ferguson  
Ruth Gruber, Harold Sharlin, by Robert Weinstein and Judith Capen, Lora and Frank Ferguson  
Gilbert Harwood, Leon Hunt, Eva Jacob, Lotte Povar, Regine Ransohoff, Arnold Soloway, by Robert Weinstein and Judith Capen

## ENDOWMENT FUND

IN HONOR OF  
Robert Friedman's birthday, by Brenda Levenson  
Meryl and George Weiner and their new grandson, by Laurie and Dan Brumberg

IN MEMORY OF  
Milton Booth, by Sid and Elka Booth  
Harvey Goldberg, by Michelle Sender  
Rose Herschkovitz, by Brenda Levenson  
Leon Hunt, by Sid and Elka Booth

## GENERAL FUND

Jonathan Westreich and Grace Mitchell Westreich

IN HONOR OF  
Robert Friedman's 90th birthday, by Rhoda Hyde  
Nate Gehrke becoming Bar Mitzvah, by John David Marks  
Rabbi Esther Lederman, by Marion and Leonard Levine  
Meryl and George Weiner's grandson, Sebastian, by Frances and Stuart Schwartz, Beverly and Harlan Sherwat

IN MEMORY OF  
Edith Hertz Brown, by Edward Brown and Nancy Yanofsky  
Jack Chernak, by Beverly and Harlan Sherwat  
Eugene Cohen, by Ann Cohen  
Harvey Goldberg, by Norman Blumenfeld, Rachel Gross and Douglas Taphouse, Richard Fitz and Kathy Spiegel, Beverly and Harlan Sherwat  
Alfred Goldeen, by David and Livia Bardin  
Ruth Goldman, by Marion and Leonard Levine  
Ruth Gruber, by David and Ludmilla Asher, Frances and Stuart Schwartz  
Leon Hunt, by Susie and Harvey Blumenthal  
Betsy Kanarek and Russell Scott, by Learita Scott  
Bobbie Landsberg, by Lynne Landsberg and Dennis Ward  
Edythe F. Levine, by Philip and Barbara Levine

Pearl Nathan, by David and Johanna Forman  
Minnie Bloom Odoroff and Jerry Odoroff, by Elizabeth Odoroff  
Harold Sharlin, by Kirsten Goldberg and Maija Rejman, Margaret and Jeffrey Grotte  
Etta Sugarman Weisman, by Steven Weisman and Elisabeth Bumiller  
Natalie Westreich, by Jonathan Westreich and Grace Mitchell Westreich

## INNOVATION FUND

IN HONOR OF  
Robert Friedman's 90th birthday, by Barbara Green, Frances and Stuart Schwartz  
David Diskin's 70th birthday, by Beverly and Harlan Sherwat

IN MEMORY OF  
J. Leonard Cahan, Ruth Gruber, Jeffrey Cohn, Harvey Goldberg, by David and Martha Adler  
Isaac Green, by Barbara Green  
Leon Hunt, by Beverly and Harlan Sherwat  
Kate Mayblum, by Harriett Stonehill  
Harold Sharlin, by Karen and David Rosenbaum

## LEARNING FUND

IN HONOR OF  
Robert Friedman's 90th birthday, by Alan and Deborah Kraut  
Roberta and Morton Goren's 50th Anniversary, by Beverly and Harlan Sherwat

IN MEMORY OF  
Ruth Goldberg, by Nancy Raskin  
Daniel Gordon, by Lisa Gordon and Nicholas Brooke  
Sara Gould, Noah Gould, and Phil Gould, by Hannah Gould  
Rose C. Heller, by Marilyn Paul  
Samuel Iker, by Jean Iker  
Harold Sharlin, by Paul Greenberg and Rick Billingsley,  
Beverly and Harlan Sherwat  
Louis Solomon, by Jeff Passel  
Estelle Weiss, by Martha Weiss and Joshua Rosenthal  
Harry Wellins, by Norman Blumenfeld  
Louise Wheatley, by Jeff Passel

## MICAH HOUSE

Al and Ginger From  
Leda Gottlieb and Ed Zetlin  
Margaret Henoch

IN HONOR OF  
Adam Goldstein, by Aaron P. Taylor

IN MEMORY OF  
Montgomery Carlson, by Martha Weiss and Joshua Rosenthal  
Ruth Gruber, by Sue Baum  
Vivian Liebenau, by Betsy and Harold Closter

Harold Sharlin, by Susan and Richard Lahne

## RABBI BERAHA'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Deborah Friedman and Marc Strass  
Rabbi Marc and Linda Raphael

IN HONOR OF  
Rabbi Beraha's Tot Shabbats, by Lani and Michael Inlander  
David Diskin's birthday, by Ronna and Stan Foster

## RABBI LANDAU'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Estate of Jeffrey Cohn  
Rabbi Marc and Linda Raphael

IN HONOR OF  
Rabbi Susan Landau, by Norman Blumenfeld  
In honor of Rabbi Susan Landau and in memory of Ruth Goldman, by Marion and Leonard Levine  
Nancy Raskin becoming a docent at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, by Richard Fitz and Kathy Spiegel

## RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Estate of Jeffrey Cohn

IN MEMORY OF  
Eva Benda, by Susan Benda  
Harvey Goldberg, by Arlene Brown and Eugene Bialek,  
Myra and Mark Kovey  
Conrad Platt, by Steven Weisman and Elisabeth Bumiller  
Louise Pasarew, Sidney Reiff, by Isabel Reiff and Lee Pasarew  
Arnold Soloway, by Stan and Kathy Soloway  
Dorothy Ward, by Lynne Landsberg and Dennis Ward

## SOCIAL JUSTICE FUND

Estate of Jeffrey Cohn

IN HONOR OF  
David Diskin's special birthday, by Judy and Charlie Kramer  
Robert Friedman's 90th birthday, by David and Barbara Diskin  
Meryl and George Weiner's grandson, Sebastian, by Judy Ludwin Miller and Jim Miller

IN MEMORY OF  
Hilda Berner, by Diana and Robert Seasonwein  
Carley Broder, by Betsy Broder and David Wentworth  
Jeffrey Cohn, by Sidney and Elka Booth, Susan and Richard Lahne, Gail Povar and Larry Bachorik  
Harvey Goldberg, by Lynne Landsberg and Dennis Ward  
Ruth Gruber, by David and Barbara Diskin, Wendy Schumacher

Pearl Obrand, by Lorri Manasse and Russ Misheloff  
John C. Ward, by Alice Greenwald  
Harry Wellins, by Beverly and Harlan Sherwat

## WORSHIP FUND

IN HONOR OF  
Meryl and George Weiner's grandson, Sebastian, by Arlene Brown and Eugene Bialek, Kathy Spiegel and Richard Fitz

IN MEMORY OF  
Ruth Gruber, by Gail Povar and Larry Bachorik, Jack and Joan Schwarz  
Lillie Page, by Bill Page and Mary Hollis  
Frederic Sugarman, by Carole Sugarman and Mark Pelesh

## THE RABBI DANIEL GOLDMAN ZEMEL FUND FOR ISRAEL

IN HONOR OF  
David Diskin's 70th birthday, by Judy and Jack Hadley

IN MEMORY OF  
Ruth Gruber, by Roberta Aronson and Paul Goldberg, Judy and Jack Hadley, Kenneth Liberstein  
Harold Sharlin, by Judy and Jack Hadley, Trudy and John Saracco  
Stephanie Aines Hadley, Virginia Aines, Joseph Aines, Edward Salkovitz, Suzanne Salkovitz, Simon Hadley, and Anna Hadley, by Judy and Jack Hadley

## YEAR END: GIVING THANKS

Ruth and William Henoch  
Harriette Kinberg  
Natalie Schreyer

*This list reflects donations received as of March 20, 2017. Every effort has been made to ensure its accuracy, but if there are any errors or omissions please accept our apologies. For corrections or clarifications, please contact Rhiannon Walsh in the temple office. Thank you.*

In the February/March 2017 issue of the *Vine* (Israel photo, page 6), we incorrectly identified Elizabeth (Lizzy) Zetlin. We regret the error.



## B'NAI MITZVAH



### KATHERINE CHAVA COHEN

**MARCH 18 / 20 ADAR**

**PARENTS:** Jeffrey and Wendy Cohen

**TORAH PORTION:** Ki Tisa

**INDEPENDENT PROJECT:** Katherine baked cookies and brownies and sold them to raise money for the Trevor Project for LGBTQ and questioning youth, a suicide prevention and resource access hotline



### SYLVIE ALEXANDER

**MARCH 25 / 27 ADAR**

**PARENTS:** Ann Peters and David Alexander

**TORAH PORTION:** Vayak'heil

**INDEPENDENT PROJECT:** Sylvie is helping at Machon Micah on Sundays with pre-K and first graders teaching them what Judaism is all about. Through her work with other Micah kids, she also hopes to share her love of music while learning more about Jewish musical traditions.



### JULIET GOLDBERG

**APRIL 1 / 5 NISAN**

**PARENTS:** Elizabeth and Eric Goldberg

**TORAH PORTION:** Vayikra

**INDEPENDENT PROJECT:** Juliet worked with classmate Suzy Fanning to make new pet toys for the Animal Welfare League in Arlington. This project relates to both girls' Torah portions, which teaches being kind and respectful to animals.



### NATALIE SIPRESS

**APRIL 8 / 12 NISAN**

**PARENTS:** Alan Sipress and Ellen Nakashima

**TORAH PORTION:** Tzav

**INDEPENDENT PROJECT:** Natalie is exploring and will be pursuing a project that focuses on food as a way of building community.



### MAXWELL J. LEVINE

**APRIL 22 / 26 NISAN**

**PARENTS:** Mark Levine and Amy McLaughlin

**TORAH PORTION:** Shmini

**INDEPENDENT PROJECT:** Max recently helped organize activities at Micah's MLK All Community day. He is now working with his Machon class to host one of Oxfam's Hunger Meals, which teach participants about food insecurity around the world.

PHOTO  
UNAVAILABLE

### ANDERSON RUCK

**APRIL 29 / 3 IYAR**

**PARENTS:** Lisa Davis and Robert Shapiro

**TORAH PORTION:** Tazria-Metzora

**INDEPENDENT PROJECT:** To be decided

PHOTO  
UNAVAILABLE

### BRIDGET SPECTOR

**MAY 6 / 10 IYAR**

**PARENT:** Jeffrey Spector

**TORAH PORTION:** Achrei Mot-Kedoshim

**INDEPENDENT PROJECT:** To be decided



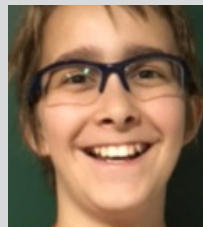
### NATE FOX-HALPERIN

**MAY 13 / 17 IYAR**

**PARENTS:** Susannah Fox and Eric Halperin

**TORAH PORTION:** Emor

**INDEPENDENT PROJECT:** Since Nate's portion focuses on the festivals of the Jewish calendar, he is talking (sometimes via Skype) with people in his extended family about rituals, traditions, and their meaning in our lives.



### YASHA SAMUEL JACOB VAN PRAAGH

**MAY 20 / 24 IYAR**

**PARENTS:** Peter and Lena Van Praagh

**TORAH PORTION:** Behar-Bechukotai

**INDEPENDENT PROJECT:** Yasha first considered exploring the relationship between Judaism and baseball, two important aspects of his life. But his desire to pursue justice led him to helping refugees and new immigrants to the U.S. He helped lead the class philanthropy project with HIAS and hopes to volunteer there over the summer.

## MAZAL TOV!

Peter Lovenheim, on the birth of his grandson, Andrew Solomon Goldfarb;  
Noah Westreich, on his acceptance to rabbinical school

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Leslie Douglas, Aaron Kaufman, Nancy Leeds,  
Norma Lerner, Aaron Pollon and Amanda Demczuk,  
Benjamin Rubenstein and Catherine Salsman,  
Erica Werner and William Margeson

## CONDOLENCES

The Temple Micah community extends its deepest condolences to:

**MARJORIE MARCUS**, on the passing of her father,  
Julius Israel Marcus

**JACOB KARABELL**, on the passing of his father,  
Leonard Karabell

**JENNIFER GRUBER**, on the passing of her mother,  
Ruth Gruber

**LESLIE RIGGS**, on the passing of her husband,  
Leon Hunt, and her brother, Douglas Appleton

**MICHAEL FEUER**, on the passing of his brother,  
Peter Feuer

May their memories be for a blessing.

# SOLAR PANELS INSTALLATION CELEBRATED ON SHABBAT SHIRAH

BY PAUL SHAPIRO

AT SHABBAT MORNING services on February 11, Temple Micah celebrated the installation last summer of 88 solar panels on the temple's roof. That date was chosen because it coincided with the Hebrew date 15 Shevat (Tu B'Shevat), the traditional New Year of the Trees. At the service, Rabbi Beraha called to the bimah everyone who worked on the three-year solar panel project. He explained that the holiday of Tu B'Shevat by acknowledging the importance of trees expresses our appreciation of the whole environment. Thus, we celebrate it by eating fruit and nuts.

The rabbi also read a prayer written by member David Schneider to commemorate the installation of solar panels on the roof of his home:

*Adonai, you cause the sun to rise  
With a radiance that sustains us*

*And illuminates our kinship with each  
other and with all living things*

*Let this act of harnessing the power of  
your magnificent star*

*Allow us to build a more sustainable  
future*

*And lead to a new day when we shall  
dwell in greater harmony with all creation*

*Source of all blessings,  
Thank you for opening our eyes to the  
beauty around us*

*For expanding our hearts with gratitude  
And restoring our souls with  
appreciation.*

Micah Green Team's Paul Shapiro said, "Installing the panels was and will continue to be a great example of Tikkun Olam—repairing the earth. They make Temple Micah greener

because we are using electricity made from the sun's power instead of from coal-burning power plants."

Shapiro continued: "Burning coal emits small particles and other pollutants that are harmful when people breathe them in and carbon dioxide that is the main cause of global climate change. Extracting coal from the earth also destroys the mined or excavated area and pollutes underground water supplies and nearby rivers and streams."

"Micah members can help fight climate change," Shapiro added, "by installing solar panels on their homes. They can start getting information at [www.solar-estimate.org](http://www.solar-estimate.org) and get free estimates from installation companies." (For more on the temple's new solar panels, see page 6 of the High Holy Days 2016 issue of the *Vine*.) ♦

## Rabbi's Message FROM PAGE 1 ►

values that birthed our nation and the values that guide our own approach to and interpretation of Judaism are one and the same. Truth is sacred; without it, we are lost.

2. We must advocate for and defend Jewish values. We are the voice for the widow, the orphan, the stranger, the refugee. We are the voice that insists all people are equal and all must stand equal before the law. There is no place for prejudice or bigotry in our world. We are commanded to be the benevolent children of a benevolent God. We are forbidden to remain idle while our neighbor is in distress. These are values that can know no compromise. If we lose them, we lose our very souls.

We must learn from others, such as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who wrote from a

Birmingham jail:

"How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law....Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust.... Paul Tillich has said that sin is separation....An unjust law is a code inflicted upon a minority which that minority had no part in enacting...."

King's words can guide our reading of Torah as we assess how to live by the moral claims that Torah makes on our lives. With King we come to appreciate the moral demand of civil disobedience.

3. We must protect the sacred. The rabbis taught, "Make a fence around the Torah." By that they meant

protect the Torah from being violated. They would make the law a bit stricter so it would not be violated accidentally. For example, Shabbat lasts 25 hours rather than 24 so that if you start late or end a bit early, the daylong boundary remains intact. For us this means that even as we, as a congregation, seek to make our voice heard and our presence felt in the public square, we must hold true to who we are. As a community, we will be judicious about advocating and participating in public events on Shabbat or Holy Days. We will remain rooted in Torah because only then can we authentically give voice to its values.

The decision of the Reform Movement to offer a Shabbat worship experience the morning of the Women's March on Washington in January made it possible for those who wished to both celebrate Shabbat and

participate in the march to do so. "Both and" will not always be the case. I believe that Micah, as a Jewish religious entity, must be protectors of the fence except in the rarest of circumstances.

Our society has been wrenched apart. The synagogue can be a place where we gather to give voice to what we believe. It also must be a place where we go to restore our souls, drink the living waters of Torah and reclaim our humanity, a place where we can lean on each other as we search for inspiration and wisdom.

We are carriers of history's oldest message. Jews don't despair. We act. We bend our backs, our souls, our hearts, our hands, our minds to the challenge at hand and move forward. The world needs us. In each moment, we rise.

Shalom,  
Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel

## BERAHA'S BLACKBOARD

## TEMPLE MICAH AS A 'FOCUSING LENS'

BY RABBI JOSH BERAHA

The purpose of a building is to live in, or to work, shop and eat in. A road is to drive on, a sidewalk to walk on. Toys to play with. Utensils to eat with.

Nearly the entirety of our physical, human-created world is purposeful. Utilitarian. Human beings can hardly live in chaos, wrote the historian of religion Marcea Eliade, and so since early man dropped foraging and established permanent residences, we've continued, for many millennia, to build an organized world.

And if human beings can hardly live in chaos, *religious* beings all the more so.

To be religious is to see beyond the utilitarian. To be religious is to transcend the horizontal limits of our organized world and, for example, turn an otherwise ordinary space into one with an anything-but-ordinary purpose. And so, with a proper mindset and possibly a blessing, a table becomes an altar, a mere building becomes a sacred space with a vertical focus. Magic!

Temple Micah is one such space. Yes, we are on Google Maps. You can plug in our address on Waze. Why yes, to the untrained eye, we are just another building on Wisconsin Avenue in the middle of a city with thousands of other buildings.

But Temple Micah is so much more: a place to gather, to celebrate, to sing, to learn, to explore. Our building is defined *not* by its horizontalness, but by its upward thrust toward the cosmos, into the invisible, the mystery. Our physical space represents the religious desire to move beyond the self, and it holds a *moral* purpose.

A house of worship runs

against the mission of every other building you pass to get here. And so when you arrive you ascend stairs and enter a door capped with the Ten Commandments, framed by an angle over the door resembling the shape of a house's roof, symbolizing that you are home. This structure can be found all around the building. When you pass the mezuzah, enter the second doorway, and proceed into the sanctuary, you do so *not* to be entertained, *not* to consume, but to refocus your attention on things that matter, to connect you to a world beyond.

Jonathan Z. Smith, in his essay "The Bare Facts of Ritual," describes a house of worship as "a focusing lens." Everything in a house of worship has potential for significance, he says. Thus, a flame that might light a building or street corner elsewhere here serves to represent God's presence. And a piece of wood or a stone that might otherwise serve a structural purpose here brings us closer to the desert where our people wandered from slavery to freedom.

As we made our way through the book of Exodus, we continued to learn about the *mishkan*, the tabernacle or tent that the Israelites built as an earthly dwelling place for God. The Torah records every detail of its construction. "They made crossbars of acacia wood... overlaid with gold...and they made curtains of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen..."

The rabbis understand the building of the *mishkan* to be a symbol of God's covenant with the people, for despite their brief love affair with the golden calf, God still—in great mercy—offers instructions

for how to build a dwelling place for the sacred. Which means that embedded in the foundation of the *mishkan* is forgiveness and love. Consider this for a moment. Before entering the land of Israel, the Israelites and God endeavor to understand each other. Like pre-marital counseling, of sorts. And through constant back and forth, they eventually finish the *mishkan* and join their horizontal desert journey with a vertical focus beyond the journey.

As Eliade writes, "Nothing can begin, nothing can be done, without a previous orientation—and any orientation implies acquiring a fixed point." For the Israelites, the *mishkan* becomes their fixed point. The *mishkan* enables them to see beyond the narrowness of their needs, and its presence allows the people's selfish desires to be surpassed by something more. In its mere structural existence, the *mishkan* reminds the people of God, who brought them out of Egypt to be their God. And when they behold God's



dwelling place, they find true direction.

Whenever we choose to exit the grounded, horizontal world and enter Temple Micah, we bring ourselves closer to love, closer to God. When we step into this boundless building, we cross an invisible threshold. And in our togetherness in this "fixed point," we—hopefully—orient ourselves and remind ourselves of who we are, where we've been, and possibly, where we want to go.

For me, I need this "fixed point," this interruption in space. I crave an abode that is qualitatively dissimilar to every other space I inhabit in this world. What a gift, really! Shabbat, a break in time, and our temple, a break in the plane of space. Taken together, we are time travelers and we are space travelers, on a moral mission. Join us!

## MICAH'S LIVING HISTORY, NOW LIVE ONLINE

Did you know that Temple Micah might have been located on a ferry boat in the Potomac River? That's just one of the fascinating tidbits in "Temple Micah — A Living History, 1963 to Today," our new interactive digital history. To enjoy the stories and learn the facts, go to [templemicah.org](http://templemicah.org), scroll down to the quick links and click on "The Living History Project," or go directly to [themichahstory.org](http://themichahstory.org). Better yet, contribute your own fact or anecdote by pushing the feedback button at the end of each section.



the annual  
**TEMPLE MICAH**  
spring auction

Saturday, May 13, 2017  
6:00-9:30 pm

To make this event a success, we need you!  
Enjoy the social event of the season and help  
raise much-needed funds for Temple Micah!  
Tickets are \$36 in advance or \$40 at the door.

For more information,  
visit <https://templemicah.org/community/events/auction>  
Complimentary childcare available.



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